

The Submissive Mind of Epaphroditus

Philippians 2:25–30 | Sermon Guide

25 I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need, 26 for he has been longing for you all and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill. 27 Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. 28 I am the more eager to send him, therefore, that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious. 29 So receive him in the Lord with all joy, and honor such men, 30 for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me.

Main Idea

A submissive mind joyfully gives itself to the work of Christ, lovingly bears burdens for others, and gladly honors faithful servants of the Lord.

Opening Reflection

- How would someone describe you in three words or less?
- Stephen Covey's funeral thought experiment asks: What do I want people to truthfully say about my character, relationships, faithfulness, and influence at the end of my life?
- Christian reflection goes even deeper: What would I want the Lord to say when I stand before Him?

My three words:

1. The Description of Epaphroditus — v. 25

- Paul describes Epaphroditus as a brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier.
- He walked in a manner worthy of the gospel: he loved Christ, served with Paul, and was willing to suffer for the work of Christ.
- He identified and pursued his God-given assignment as the Philippians' messenger and minister to Paul's need.
- **Application:** Is my life characterized by love for God and others?

Response:

2. The Distress of Epaphroditus and Paul — vv. 26–28

- Epaphroditus longed for his church family and was distressed because they heard he was ill.
- His distress shows that deep emotion is not automatically sinful. It is possible to be deeply burdened and still trust God.
- Paul was concerned about Epaphroditus’s near-death illness and about bearing “sorrow upon sorrow.”
- God showed mercy by sparing Epaphroditus and relieving Paul’s anxiety.
- **Application:** How deeply do I care about those around me? Is my concern rooted in reality or imagination?

Key Illustration: Faithfulness in Real Weakness

- Abraham Lincoln endured seasons of deep emotional darkness, yet he learned to live faithfully and fruitfully through meaningful work, friendship, humor, and moral purpose.
- His sorrow did not disqualify him from usefulness; it deepened his empathy, patience, and seriousness as he led during national crisis.
- Lesson: Suffering does not remove the believer from service. God can use weakness to shape compassion and endurance.

Personal reflection:

3. The Desire of Paul to Give Honor — vv. 29–30

- Paul commands the church to receive Epaphroditus in the Lord with all joy.
- Paul also commands them to honor such men because Epaphroditus nearly died for the work of Christ.
- Epaphroditus risked his life to complete what was lacking in the Philippians’ service to Paul.
- Faithful servants may be overlooked by people for a season, but God sees their labor and teaches His church to honor them rightly.
- **Application:** Who can I intentionally honor this week?

Supporting Scripture for Honoring Faithful Servants

- Romans 12:10 — “Outdo one another in showing honor.”
- 1 Corinthians 16:18 — “Give recognition to such people.”
- 1 Thessalonians 5:12–13 — Esteem spiritual laborers very highly in love because of their work.
- 1 Timothy 5:17 — Elders who rule well are worthy of double honor.

Personal Application Questions

- How do I want others to describe me at my funeral? What would I want the Lord to say?
- Am I walking as a brother/sister, fellow worker, and fellow soldier in the gospel?
- How am I handling unexpected illness, weakness, disappointment, or delay?
- Is my anxiety based on imagined outcomes or real responsibilities I need to entrust to God?
- Who is serving faithfully around me, and how can I show them honor this week?

Prayer

Lord, give me the submissive mind of Christ. Make me faithful in my assignment, tender toward the burdens of others, steady in weakness, and eager to honor those who serve You well. Amen.